

Joint Capital Planning Committee Minutes
April 2, 2010

The meeting began at 8:30 am in the Town Room at Town Hall.

Present: JCPC members: Diana Stein, Carol Gray, Sarah McKee, Kay Moran, Stephanie O’Keeffe, Catherine Sanderson, and Doug Slaughter; Others present: Bonnie Isman, John Musante, Jonathan Tucker, Peter Jessop, and Sonia Aldrich.

Report from Peter Jessop of the Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC). CPAC has finished their recommendations. They are recommending projects totaling \$247,368 out of \$880,251. There are also a number of conservation projects in the works so some of the unspent funds might be for those purposes should they become ready later in the year. CPAC is recommending bonding for a couple of the projects, which would likely be a 10 year bond: 1) The housing project for \$350,000 to refurbish affordable housing units managed by the Amherst Housing Authority is a matching grant project which will leverage another \$350,000 from the state; 2) \$500,000 for the Hawthorne Open Space, Recreation, and Community Housing project. This will mean that a couple hundred thousand will already be earmarked for future years, but it also means that there will be a treasure chest available in excess of \$511,000 for other meritorious projects that come along. Other obligations from existing bonds on CPAC projects were summarized such as the Town Hall masonry project and the Plum Brook soccer fields project. John mentioned the requirement that 10% be allocated for the three mandatory categories: open space, affordable housing, and historic preservation; he asked if Open Space was adequately covered. Peter said it was because the continuing obligation for the Plum Brook allocation counted toward that 10% requirement.

It was discussed that a Historic Deed Restriction would be acquired on the Jones Library, which means the building would have to remain a historic building. It would probably apply to more than the slate roof being replaced. The intent is to preserve the character of the building for future use.

Report from John summarizing the proposed JCPC budget: The top page cover sheet provided summarizes total amount of funds available. The capital plan was level funded from last year, \$2,298,000, approximately 6% of the overall tax levy. There are some preliminary estimates of what it would cost for items that would be bonded out. \$2.55 million is the total allocated. The proposed budget is basically a balanced budget (only a \$259 difference). John said the original requests were more than \$800,000 over-budget, but he has pushed \$800,000 of projects off to another year. There are big ticket items in years to come (such as the proposed new fire station) which will need to be discussed. John identified \$57,665 in unspent capital appropriations from previous years that can be reallocated to new projects.

John discussed some of the items he recommended be funded, one department at a time:

IT: Item 8 includes a program called Eunice Dashboard for \$35,000, which allows more information to be usable on a desk-top with real time scheduling. It’s an efficiency tool to be less reliant on clerical staff. All the other Information systems were postponed to a future year.

Police: Standard replacement of 4 police cruisers for \$140,000. The replacement ambulance would be funded from the ambulance fund. The fuel pumping system is something that we just have to do since it will stop pumping at some point. The areal ladder had been pushed off for many years; it would be \$95,000. The protective gear was pushed off to another year since there may be grants that could be applied for in the coming months for this item. Thermal imaging cameras could be purchased through grants or fund-raising. These were pushed off since the ladder truck really needs fixing since the Town is getting hurt badly in the maintenance budget on this item.

Public Works: A bunch of the equipment will be pushed off. The Asphalt reclaimer will be funded by Chapter 90 funds. The \$5,000 for park replacement will allow the public to enjoy the parks more.

Building Maintenance: \$5,000 for furniture would be put off to next year.

Schools: We would buy one bus this year, then skip years in the future. Kitchen Equipment: this is the second year of a 2 year project to replace out-dated and decrepit kitchen equipment at Fort River and Wildwood. Regarding IT requests for the schools, these were left in since future years in this area looked heavy.

BUILDINGS:

There is \$25,000 already in the building envelope account so this item can be pushed to next year. Interior work on Town Hall will be pushed off.

The Child Care facility needs roof work and other maintenance. We plan to explore whether CDBG block grant money could be used for this.

Munson Library:

The lack of energy controls causes us to inefficiently keep the heat on. \$1,000 per year could be saved by having a remote energy control.

South Amherst Campus:

This is the consolidation of East Street School and South Amherst School. \$250,000 is requested for this. In addition, there is a roof on the newer part of the building that leaks like a sieve. \$80,000 is needed for the roof repair. The south facing wall repair is priced at \$100,000. John talked to Ron about getting a bid for all three projects. The belief is that 10%-15% could be saved by bundling. John is suggesting a bond issue for \$430,000, to be paid over the next 10 years. The debt service projected schedule (last page of handout) shows this would be about \$58,000 for the first year, then less for remaining years. The debt service would be included into future budgets. The construction would likely start in 2012 and be ready for school in 2012. It requires an action this spring to do all this.

Line 267: police station is in pretty good shape. \$5,000 is requested for carpeting in high traffic areas. Some other building needs are pushed off.

The **Hitchcock Center** Board is working on creating a new building. Issues related to the site. Dave Ziomek is recommending that we keep \$5,000 in the budget for site design in the future. The vast majority of building work would be privately funded, but the Town owns the building so has a duty as landlord.

Jones Library: The proposal is to fund the two highest priorities: \$50,000 for the elevator repair and \$50,000 for HVAC. The latter is to replace the cooling tower. Cooling tower was id'ed as a critical need. It would be the main unit that would service the new system being put in the special collections. The self-check out would be delayed.

Energy Efficiency for School Buildings: This would be replacing old software, similar to the Munson Library, but on a bigger scale. When John talked to Ron about this, this issue rose high on the priority list because it would result in immediate savings. John will send JCPC members Ron's powerpoint showing what energy savings changes have been made and with what savings.

The line item amount for Asbestos removal was amended because of funds already reserved for this from last year. Line item 262 is repaving which is important to avoid tripping hazards. The repaving would mean blasting out what is there to replace with material that is ADA compliant.

Another item not on our printout is a total of \$57,665 which could be declared surplus and reallocated. E.g., Because we're vacating Marks Meadows, no more money will be spent on that HVAC so that money is freed up. One other project came in less than it was bid at. \$8,800 from the North Amherst School. That project is complete and there is \$8,800 remaining.

When asked about the \$80,000 that was authorized by Town Meeting for East Street School a couple years ago, John said this money was to be in the form of a bond authorization that was never used. It's not cash. It will be a housekeeping matter to go back to Town Meeting in the fall to rescind the authorization on that bond.

Questions: Kay asked the School Representative if the School Committee had discussed this and if there were a plan from the next year. She pointed out that the School's FY11 budget factored in consolidating the two schools, but it appears that will not happen until one year later. She asked if the school department is committed to using the South Amherst School. The School Committee has not discussed this or been told about this prior to when it was announced in this room a couple weeks ago. Kay pointed out that when the mobile classrooms were voted a few years ago, we were convinced that they were definitely needed. Catherine said the school committee has not yet discussed this. She pointed out that this is not on the agenda for the Elementary budget, but there are meetings scheduled for this week and she could ask that this item be added if the JCPC wanted immediate discussions. Kay said it would certainly help deliberations. The School Staff pointed out that this issue was on the cuts list discussed in previous years (i.e., merging the two schools). John said as a practical matter, there wouldn't be building commencing immediately, could we delay the bond funding until the fall. Sarah said she discussed this issue with a teacher at the South Amherst campus, this former teacher was concerned that merging these two populations in the same building might not be in the best interest of one group of these students. She learned that the restrooms would be shared and this could be problematic. There was also concern expressed about disruption to students.

There was a discussion about how many police cars JCPC would recommend. Diana said she would like to make a motion for three police cars. Kay said she would move that we fund 4 police cars and that the larger amount should be voted on first. Kay moved that the JCPC fund four police cars. The motion was seconded by Doug to fund four police cars. The vote was three in favor (Kay, Stephanie and Doug), three against (Diana, Carol and Sarah), and one abstention (Catherine). Since the motion did not get a majority, it failed. It was agreed that the issue of the number of police cars would be revisited at the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10:50am.

Secretary: Carol Gray